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For Old Beliefs

By HELEN SANTMYER

We felt no sense of loss when, years ago,
Our faith in the enthroned God was shaken.
We had so many things: how could we know
That we should grieve for old beliefs forsaken?

Beauty of winds that blew from far strange places,
Companionship with earth in her green springs,
We knew. Beneath the wide sky's starry spaces
Desire to know the mysteries of things.

Friendship and mirth we had, and ours was youth,
And love, like great deep-shadowing peaceful trees.
So, having all that men would have save truth,
We read with laughter old philosophies.

But now we go alone, though hand in hand,
Tongue-tied with passions God would understand.

In the Potato Field

By EDWIN FORD PIPER

An hour till noon, yet shimmering waves of heat
Blur the horizon. In the open field
The nervous horses drag the noisy plough,
And swing their sweaty necks and switch at flies.
The lines are knotted at Big Brother's back;
His tanned arms tensely steer the quivering handles
While the black furrow, flowing, buries
Dead vine and growing weed. Wild buckwheat bloom
Sprinkles the patch with color; one sunflower
Doming in blossom, shades a sleepy dog.

With fingers like dry clods Father and I
Rake in the odorous earth; under my knees
The soil is cool and crumbly. Brother comes
To help; I show as prize a great potato
Larger than my bare foot. He laughs and calls,
As he pours my bucket into a half-filled sack,
"A good yield, Father."

Just then a white grub
Like a fat wheel rolls down to the furrow. I miss
The talk till I hear Father say: "The interest
Will eat up the whole crop."

I look all round.
The tone and the mystery strike to my heart.

"Here, Tige," I call, and the huge fellow, lifting
His brindled form, trots, lolling a red tongue.
I feel safe while my arm about his neck
Shakes with his breathing, and I put my cheek
On his white forehead, and I shout to Father,

"Say, can't Tige keep him off?"

"Keep who off, Boy?"

"Why, interest, — or what you said. You know."

"Too much for Tige, my son."

I cannot hear
The words to my big brother; I work hard
While the sun dries my skin and burns my shirt
Against my back; we must get the crop home.

Hope —

Young hope persists: "Uncle Jim with his big re-
volver

He had in the Civil War could watch the patch."

"Never mind, Boy!" And though Father's voice
went lower,

This comes: "The mortgage will eat up the place."

My quickening heart feels wonder that the men
Seem unafraid.

"And will it eat us, too?"

"Will what eat us?"

"The mur — murgridge, you called it."

"Mortgage? O no, my son. We want fresh water;
We'll send our best man for it, and that's you.
No need to hurry."

On the homeward way
I do not stop to pick the black-eyed Susans;
I run and run, and my short lumpy shadow
Bobs underfoot. Where does this monster hide?
In the rows of corn, or in the high slough grass?
Or the grove of cottonwoods? I keep on running.

My mother says: "You must be tired. Come wash;
And here's a cookie."

I trot to the field.
The sun burns on my body, and the ground
Scorches my feet. When Father takes the jug
I shake my tired shoulder.

"This mortgage, say, —
Father, what does he look like? Like a bear,
Or a big snake?"

"What, still about the mortgage?
Why, Son, the mortgage is a piece of paper.
Lie here on the empty bags with Tige beside you,
And watch for the dinner flag."

I look awhile;
The heat haze shimmers, and my eyes go shut;
I wonder how — and then a white blotch spreads
Over the house, and grows and rolls like fire,
A winged monster with a smoky tail,
Roaring. They wake me from the troubled dream;
I find the wagon loaded with the sacks
Ready for home. I hear Big Brother's voice:

"I can homestead out there. It's a good chance
For a quarter section, and if you consent
I'll start next week."

"We'll talk of this with mother."

In the soft ground the wagon wheels sink deep;
The harness leather creaks as the horses plod
And toss their sweaty necks and switch at flies.
I laugh, — the mortgage is a piece of paper;
I breathe with pride, — I know, — I know a secret:
Brother is going away; — then sorrow rolls
Over me like dull clouds heavy with rain.

Retired

By RUTH SUCKOW

Seth Patterson came out of his house.

"Put on your rubbers, Pa," his wife called.

"Yeh."

He bent down stiffly to pick up his overshoes from the porch floor, leaned against the black oilcloth-covered front door, and buckled them on with fumbling movements of his big thick fingers. Little smudges of dry mud showed where they had stood.

His wife called again: "Don't forget the yeast now. Tell Henry *Yeast Foam* — not that compressed he sent me last time."

"Yeh."

He went slowly down the walk.

Mrs. Lee Atchison, hurrying up behind him, was surprised to see how like an old man he walked: not shuffling, but with a kind of aimlessness, as if he were going nowhere in particular and it didn't matter whether he ever got there. The big overshoes looked loose on his feet, his shoulders hung under his old greenish overcoat. The white hair in his neck under the worn fur cap looked thin and pathetic.

"Nice day," Mrs. Atchison cried, tapping briskly past him.

"Yes. Yes," he said vaguely. He did not really take in who she was until she had passed. Then he

muttered: "Alvina Garst — where's *she* goin' to in such a hurry?"

Nice day — he looked uneasily at the sky.

The sky was drowned deep in blue. The ever-greens in the yard showed dark against it, the bleached boughs of the maple trees seemed to be drinking it in. Little shining rivers, all current, ran down the cement sidewalk. The grass on the lawns was burned dry and pale-brown, but was wet and greenish underneath with raw watery places in the little hollows. Snow still formed a dingy crust on the shady side of the brick drug store he was passing.

It all made him say: "Won't be long now till the ground's ready."

He looked anxiously to see who was in town today.

There were not many teams. It was too muddy yet for the cars and this warm weather had spoiled the sleighing. That was Flavius Busby's old nag in front of the meat market. The boy must have driven it in. "See he's got the buggy out," Seth thought. The horse, still in its dark shaggy winter coat, lifted its drooping head and looked at him with sad brown eyes.

There were a few farmers on the street — Ed Messenger from north of town, Shumacher the stock man, he was always gadding 'round — not many. Frank must not have come in.

The mud was all churned up and wet in the street. Roads must be bad.

First he had to go to Miller's for the yeast.

There were two or three women from the country

in the front part of the store where the dress goods were. They were young, they wore knitted tam o' shanters with big fluffs of yarn on top, like the High School girls. He knew only in a general way who they were. One of them spoke, and he ducked his head vaguely.

He went on to the back of the store. Two men in mackinaws, with their overalls tucked into low reddish rubber boots, were lounging on an oilcloth-covered table where Miller kept fashion sheets and percale aprons. One of them was the husband of the woman who had spoken, one of the Tiedes from out Honey Creek way. The other was a stranger.

"How-do, Seth. What'll you have?" said Miller.

"O, put me up a package of yeast, Henry."

"All right."

"She says not that compressed you sent last time."

"*Not* the compressed. All right."

He leaned on the table with the other two men. One of them was saying, "— but the last fellow that buys is going to get stung somewhere. Now ain't that so? Land can't go up always — can it?" — "Well, maybe — Bert Thomas didn't get stung on that two hundred and thirty acres, I'll say. He got five hundred an acre —" — "Aw, come off!" "Well, he's tellin' round he did." "Yeh, *he's* tellin'!"

They were talking about land changing hands. Seth Patterson listened, at the same time sombre and wistful. Once in a while they appealed to him, but they seemed to be pretty well satisfied to keep

the talk between themselves. He couldn't help resenting the fact that the one man was a stranger. He used to know about everyone around here.

—“O, that new fellow on Cutter's place! Say, what kind of a nationality is he, anyway?”

He got up heavily, went out of the store, only answering gruffly, — when Miller called out: “Anything more you wanted, Seth?” — “Nope, that's all.”

He wandered down the little business street, two blocks long, with the brick bank building at the head and the yellow-and-brown station showing beyond.

If he went home, he wouldn't have anything much to do but sit in his rocker near the bay window and look over the *Sheepbreeders' Gazette* again. Wood all chopped and kindling cut, and 'she' looked after the chickens.

He drifted into the Post Office — not that there ever was anything. His folks in the East had been the only ones who had ever written much, and they were most of them gone now.

The room smelled damp, and there was fresh mud on the floor. The scent disturbed him, even here, mixed with smells of paper and tobacco smoke. Two blue-striped mail bags for the rural carriers were hunched in a corner. Well, it was handy to be able to stop in for your mail whenever the trains came in, not wait to have it brought out once a day —

Not even the postmaster, Mellen, was here. Just the girl, his helper. No one to say “Good day”.

He opened his box. An implement catalogue

again — “Don’t know why they keep sendin’ these things to me. Better send ’em to Frank.”

There was no special need to go home. ‘She’ wasn’t in any hurry for the yeast. He eyed the produce house a moment, then wandered in, as he had known he would.

This was where the old fellows in Coreville always congregated. It was a big dingy room littered with slatted poultry boxes, with chickens’ heads poking through, and with egg cases piled up in the corner. The men had a place by the stove where they sat on a wooden settee and some battered kitchen chairs. There were five of them today, all white-haired, all rough and weather-stained like old furniture that has been left out in the weather. Most of them had on woolen caps and old coats and sweaters.

A bar of pale but exciting sunshine fell through the dirty window almost up to their corner.

“Se’ down, Seth. Make yourself to home,” they called.

He sat down on one of the kitchen chairs close to the coal hod, which had a sprinkling of peanut shells and tobacco among the coal. The place smelled of iron, of poultry and eggs, and wood.

The same talk was going on —

“Well, I don’t know now. They’s got to come a break some day — land can’t keep on a goin’ up forever.” — “Hunter done pretty good at his sale, so they tell me.” — “Zat so? Well, he’d ought to, he’s got a pretty good stock.” — “No, sir, I don’t care what these felluhs say, when cholery once gets among

hawgs, it's got 'em, now" — "Gittin' pretty near plantin' time, all right" — "No, the ground ain't frozen much underneath. The snow's helped to keep it. Been a pretty fair winter all 'round."

Seth Patterson listened glumly. He didn't feel like talking — that moist disturbing smell in the air. He felt crabbed and helpless, sitting here just gassing with the ground getting soft and the sky blue. Uneasy, and somehow lost.

Mont Cokeheimer leaned over and said: "Whut ye goin' to put in that south forty this year, Seth?"

"Don't know," he answered shortly. "Ask Frank what he's going to put."

"O that's the way, is it?" Cokeheimer sniffed what he meant for a laugh through his nose. "Well — we can't be young always. We got to give the young ones a chanct."

Seth grunted. Cokeheimer — he was thin and loose, there was something too eager in his peering red-rimmed eyes. He licked his lips when he heard anything. The men were always taking him down.

"Nope," said Jake Ritchie, lifting his foot and staring at it before he let it down heavily, "we can't all be young."

"No — no —"

"Well, when a man's worked hard all his life," Sampson said in a raised argumentative voice, "and's done well, he's due to take things a little easy when he's getting along in years."

"O sure."

"Well, the woman likes it in town," said Ritchie.

"She's got things a little handier for her than she had 'em on the farm. And she can attend church easier, and all. She ain't so young, you know. Yes, it's more fur the woman I come to town."

"Well, a man don't want to work *all* his life."

The door was opened and a rush of bright clean March air came in. The old fellows sniffed it in.

"Say, this is good March weather."

The sunlight lit up their old frosty faces, their rough hands, and shabby clothes. The youngest Van Patten boy, Dan, was lifting poultry crates from a wagon just outside. They watched him. The sun burnt his hair to gilt, they could see the movements of his strong brown arms lifting up from their blue sleeves.

"Hear he's been shinin' round with that Bohunk girl on Wright's place."

"O, I guess that's mostly talk. Dan's a nice young felluh. He'll do well."

"Well, sir, this weather looks like plantin' time" — "O, we'll have snow yet."

Late in the afternoon Seth Patterson said he must be getting along, and wandered out. The school children were roller-skating on the walk, he had to look out for them. The sunlight was gone, the blue sky looked hard and cold. His leg ached. He had that queer feeling in his chest again — kind of a weight pressing, he had told Doc Merton. If it kept up, 'she' said he ought to go to Rochester.

He took off his overshoes stiffly and carefully on his front porch. He saw how the snow had soaked

into the wood, making the porch floor grey and soft. The place needed painting. He opened the storm door that was covered with heavy black oil cloth studded with big round bright nails.

The hallway was cold, and the front room that they kept shut off in winter. The front room had their best carpet, an organ, a golden oak center table with a knitted doily, chairs of various eras, and their own pictures in silver and red plush frames. It was stiff, chill, proper. They almost never used it.

He put back the red portieres and the folding doors and went into the sitting room.

Here he felt better. A good fire showed red through the stove, it made warm lights on the green velvet sofa, and the table, and the light-colored wall paper.

With an old man's sound, he let himself down into his big wooden rocker by the bay window. He could look through the lace curtains, past the two scrubby cedar trees, and see a little piece of the street. He could smell the earth-and-leaf odor of his wife's plants that were set on a window-bench covered with scalloped paper, and on two little white-painted stools. He picked up the *Sheepbreeders' Gazette* and looked it over again.

"Pa, 'dyou get the 'east?"

"Yeh. It's on the table."

The light began to get dim and sad. Little sounds came from the kitchen where 'she' was working. 'She' found plenty to do—her housework, the chickens, pottering around with her plants, making all kinds of fancy lace. But how could he potter—

used to big work, heavy work, in the open. Never had had any time for little pottering things.

He lay back in his chair, in the dim light.

This was the time of year when he began to miss the farm. Of course it was the thing to do, to come into town when you were getting along, and take it a little easy — Frank was married, it gave him a good start. The farm work had been getting pretty hard. Didn't want to keep on farming all his life.

But getting toward spring — the farm, the red barn smelling of hay, the way the ground sloped to the pasture with low wet places in the path, the long groaning cry of the wind mill, and the sound of the breeze in the willow grove at evening —

This was what he had looked forward to and slaved for all his life — to sit in a rocking chair, with enough in the bank, not to have to work like a horse all day in any weather — take some ease. To live in town, have things a little nicer than on the farm.

If his leg kept on he might be laid up tomorrow — well, 'twouldn't make much difference if he was, if he wanted to stay in bed.

"Frank can't put alfalfa on that forty. It's too wet," he muttered.

Sitting back dully he felt the queer crushing on his chest. He stared through the window at the dark blurs of the cedar trees, feeling it, letting it take possession of him —

It seemed to be getting worse — Well, what if it did? Maybe it would. — When a man's work was over, what was there left to live for, anyway?

Peace

By WALTER J. MUILENBURG

In the mid-western village of Oxley, ten miles from the railroad crossing, little Willis Mahaffey lived with his mother. Not long since, the father, a great, hulking brute of a man, had died after making the home gross by his presence. He had been a brakeman on the railroad and had suffered a violent death as a fitting sequel to a wild life, leaving behind him a small, thin-faced woman and a slim, dark-eyed boy whose right leg was oddly misshapen. Because of this deformity, the boy wore a pair of iron braces and walked in a sidling manner, his shoulders hunching curiously each time he advanced a step. His face, too, differed from the faces of other boys; it was lean and had tiny wrinkles about the eyes, which looked up to people with the sensitive, shy friendliness of those who have physical defects.

During the summer days he and his mother worked in the acre patch of garden behind the house. They rarely talked easily to each other. At night, when it was too hot to be indoors, they sat on the steps of the tiny porch, she with her sombre eyes staring out into the falling dusk, while he crouched beside her, silent, his head leaning lightly against her arm.

In the autumn he went back to school. After the studies were over, in the afternoon, he eagerly hur-

ried home to her. A light would come into the woman's eyes when she heard the clank of his braces on the walk.

One day she heard him coming and, as usual, stationed herself at the window to await him. As she peered out, a flush deepened in her cheeks. The boy was advancing down the walk in his queer, twisting way, with his head bent so that his face was hidden. Behind him trooped a disorderly crowd of jeering urchins. Their gibes came clearly to the ears of the watching woman.

"Ain't he a pore little boy!"

"An' such purty irons on his leg! He walks like a cow." The speaker sneaked behind his victim and snatched the ragged cap from his head. The others laughed shrilly.

The boy turned upon them. Desperate hate writhed over his features. For some moments he stood so, unable to say a word. Then the woman heard him give vent to a torrent of rage, the childish jargon mixed with oaths that came venomously from the white lips. The tormentors shrank back.

"Hear him swear!" exclaimed one, in a shocked voice.

"Sure he swears!" cried another. "My Ma won't let me play with him."

The boy turned and sullenly approached the house. The woman quickly left the window and opened the door for him. He looked up and saw by her face that she had seen.

"The fellows don't seem to care such an awful lot

for me," he said, simply. His voice shook and his fingers closed and unclosed nervously. She made no reply, but her hand rested heavily on his shoulder. Together, they went to the garden and worked until dusk.

"They call me 'Crip' — my foot, you know." He spoke up suddenly during the evening meal. In his face the weariness had passed and only a brooding perplexity shadowed the deep-set eyes.

Year upon year passed and the boy grew steadily until he seemed almost a man in stature. Beside him, the woman appeared more frail than ever. Above the black dress she wore, the small face stood out more transparent and thin.

When he had finished his ninth year at school, the boy told his mother that he would not go back.

"I'm finished with it," he said abruptly. "I'll find something to do."

She made no reply, but a pitiful look lay deep in her eyes. The boy left early next morning and returned at noon.

"I got work," he reported, — "a steady job."

"Where?"

"In the livery barn. All I got to do is sleep there at night. Hardly ever have to make a drive — and I'll get fifteen dollars a month." Pride crept into his voice.

Every morning after that she got up early, for the boy returned at six o'clock. After breakfast, they worked in the garden, silently, as always. Later in the day he slept.

As time passed, the boy often went to the livery stable earlier than before.

"You are so busy," she sighed one evening as he put on his overalls preparatory to leaving.

He flushed. "Oh, it ain't that;" he spoke in a strange voice. "I just like to be around with the boys." His averted eyes did not see the sudden fear that came into her face.

That evening, after sitting an hour on the doorstep, she wrapped a shawl about her shoulders and walked swiftly up the street. She passed the little row of untidy stores and shops until she came to a disreputable shack all by itself. From the open windows came loud laughter. She crept nearer until she stood beside the window. Again came an outburst of mirth, followed by a voice raised in profane appreciation. She knew the voice, but had never heard it like this. She stood there a moment longer, a shadowy wraith in the heavy dusk of the summer night. Then she glided away.

The following evening, as the boy was preparing to leave the house, she grasped his hand and looked shyly into his face. "Don't go yet, boy!" she entreated in a low tone. He pulled away with a laugh. "Oh, I want a little excitement," he answered, and laughed again, vacantly. He talked more easily now than formerly. He walked down the street and she stood looking after him with dimmed eyes. After he had turned the corner, she could still hear the thump of his braces. Deep, gray weariness shadowed the wrinkled little face. That night, instead of sitting out on the porch, she remained in the darkened room.

Summer waned into autumn and the mornings were sharp with frost. The village was bathed in the golden, mellow peace of Indian summer. Up and down the quiet street, the trees stood out in yellow and red. Throughout the hazy afternoons, leaves fell silently to the earth and naked twigs began to appear against the dim blue of the sky. The subtle aroma of leaf bonfires hung heavy on the air at dusk and the fires gleamed smokily red through the darkness.

With the going of the year, the woman's strength declined. One morning the boy came home to find his mother unable to prepare his breakfast. He looked at her uneasily. She saw his expression.

"I'll be all right in a day." She smiled up at him. He straightened, and the slight hardness returned to his eyes. He prepared his own meal and retired for his day-time sleep.

But the woman did not get up as she had predicted. Instead, a flush mounted into the thin, white cheeks, which were drawn so tightly that the cheekbones stood out sharply.

"Let me get a doctor." The boy offered this in a casual tone, but his eyes evaded her gaze.

"No, no — it will be all right!" she replied quickly.

But as she wasted away with the illness, he disobeyed her and returned home from work accompanied by a doctor. The boy stayed outside, waiting, until after a long time the doctor appeared. The boy faced him.

"Will she get well?"

"We'll hope so. She may recover — and she may not." He grasped his black medicine-case more firmly and hurried away.

The boy stared after the retreating man. Suddenly he turned and almost sprang through the doorway.

"Oh, mother — !" he cried.

She looked up at him and saw that his eyes were soft and shy, as they used to be, and that the lips quivered uncontrollably. For a long time he stayed at the bed-side. Rest came to her and she slept. He sat by the little window and stared out with wide, unseeing eyes. That evening he was late to work.

All winter the woman was ill. The boy was near her side constantly, except for his working and sleeping hours. His cheeks were thinner, and a strange, puzzled expression sharpened the features which now were purged of the uncleanness gained from his short straying into the social life of his fellows. Most of the time he seemed moody, except when at the side of the cot. Then he looked down at her with the same dumb love of his early boyhood days. Now, as always, they understood each other best in long silences.

As winter grew old, an occasional mild day brought the hint of coming spring to the quiet street. On one such morning, a Sunday, the woman seemed much better. Through the open window came the sound of church bells ringing clearly in the mellow air. A far-away look passed over the woman's face as she listened.

"We never went to church much, did we, boy?"

"No — I guess not," he replied. They were silent for a time.

"Do you want me to go?" he asked suddenly.

She nodded slightly.

"My clothes — ?" he looked dubiously at his worn suit.

"Oh, just slip into the back seat. Nobody will see you there." She spoke eagerly.

A little later, the boy entered the church and twisted awkwardly into a seat. The small boys beside him giggled as his braces grated against the wood of the bench ahead. He turned a flushed face to the front.

As the services advanced, the wistful look returned to his eyes. He watched the gray-haired minister intently, almost blankly at times. But as he listened, a quietness came to him. After the final hymn, the pastor stretched out his arms over the people and pronounced a benediction. Then they began to file out. The boy remained seated for a moment. The last words of the service held him with a new sense of beauty which he had not known before, and which he could not express. The words recurred again and again, with the wearied, half-pleading accent of the little gray man behind the pulpit: "May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." Peace! A momentary exaltation passed over his face. Then he, too, passed out into the radiant noon of the spring day.

"What did he talk about?" asked the mother, when he arrived at home.

"Why — he talked about religion, I guess," he replied hesitantly. She asked no more questions of him. That afternoon they sat together by the window and watched the sun go down into the mellow haze of the west. He sat, hand under his chin, looking into the distance.

"It's been such a fine day," she said musingly.

"Sort o' mild and nice — peaceful — like the minister said this morning," he broke in suddenly; and the woman, looking at him in surprise, widened her eyes at the passion of longing in his face. He drew into himself and they said little more that evening.

As the days became warmer, the woman steadily gained strength, though her features still held the spiritual warmth that comes to those who have been near death. The boy, too, had an earnestness in his manner and, in a hesitating way, tried to act the cavalier to his mother.

One morning he returned home with excitement in his bearing. "I got a raise!" he announced. "Twenty-five a month, and the boss is goin' to use cars instead of livery rigs. I'm goin' to be an auto-driver — chauffer —" he chuckled irrepressibly. "Everything's just goin' so fine," he added half shyly. She lay back contentedly in her chair and together they watched dusk gather among the trees in the street. Through the silence of twilight came the clear singing of robins, high up in the branches of the budding trees.

In early June the doctor made his last visit. He stayed but a few moments.

"No use for me to come again," he said, as he picked up his hat from the chair. "You are practically well."

"And she may be outdoors again?" the boy cried eagerly.

"Yes — just so she is careful."

"The bill?" — a tinge of anxiety crept into the woman's voice.

"The bill," the doctor answered half angrily, "is nothing."

They regarded him with astonishment.

"But," the worthy doctor added, "you're not going to tell anybody. I'd be broke pretty soon if people got the idea they could soft-soap me."

"Why — we can pay," the boy said quietly, with a flushed face.

"No, you can't — and that's the end of it!" The doctor attempted a sneer, which speedily degenerated into a feeble, uncomfortable grin, and stalked outside.

The next evening, after supper, the boy picked up his cap. "I'll be back in a second," he said rapidly. "Must see the boss a minute."

Before she could reply, he was out of the house. Fifteen minutes later, the beating of a motor sounded up the street. The woman, glancing up, saw her son driving a car up to the walk, sitting very erect behind the wheel.

"Get ready for a ride!" he called as he came up to her. "The boss said I might use the car as often as I wanted to. Told him about you, and he said

right off that I just had to take you out for a spin tonight. So get your shawl — and no use to fix up.”

He helped her into the car with a stiff pride in his bearing. She could not refrain from glancing toward the next house, where the neighbors were enjoying the evening. The boy looked at her from the corner of his eyes. He saw speechless content in her face.

The car purred smoothly down the street. Past the two blocks that composed the business section of the village, he drove very slowly. The woman gazed on either side with undisguised pleasure. Then the street opened out upon the curving country road, lying gray and peaceful between the dim green fields. The sun hung lazily on the horizon, while a full moon already touched the dusk in the east with silver. The woman sighed.

“I never thought there was anything in the world like this.” She spoke in a tone of detachment, of awe.

“Oh, we’re just coming to things, mother!”

The sun sank below the horizon line. The afterglow flamed high, then mellowed from red to softer orange and yellow. At last the color died and the moon filled the land with an unknown marvel, making all things merge into dim light or faint shadow.

“My, you can drive so easily!” she exclaimed. “Isn’t it hard?”

“Nothing to it,” he replied. “We’re goin’ slow now. Wait till I speed up!”

The purring motor began to whine in a growing

crecendo until the small car fairly leaped up the road. The woman bent forward and clutched his arm. "Oh, I'm afraid!" she cried. "Let's go slower!"

"This ain't nothing!" His voice thrilled with the exaltation of the fast driver. He bent down and pressed a button; the electric lights made the dusty road seemed a white ribbon that unravelled beneath them with fluid rapidity.

"Forty — forty-one — " the boy's lips closed in a tight line, then began to move in a whisper again. "Forty-five — fifty — !" The boy moved the levers slowly. The car quivered under the driving power that hurled it along. The rush of air drummed in their ears. Onward they flew, unaware of the night, feeling only the wild abandon of the flight. The boy stared tensely ahead, with a face that seemed graven from stone. "Wide open — " he whispered at last, apparently to himself.

Suddenly the gray of the road became black. The boy kicked the brake down, but too late. The car struck a rut, swung high, and overturned. A sharp cry sounded into the silence of the empty night.

When the boy opened his eyes, he lay for a moment motionless. Then comprehension convulsed his face. Near him, a dark blot bulked up in the moonlight. He knew it was the car. His eyes roved farther, in vain. With a stifled groan, he turned his head over. Not two feet away, the face of the woman lay upturned to the sky. With infinite effort, he lifted his arm until the hand touched her face. He

drew it back sharply and his eyes stared straight upward. How clear and quiet the night was! The wavy outline of encircling hills stood out against the luminous horizon, seeming to enclose him comfortingly. And he, too, was filled with quietness. Sensation slowly ebbed from his body, but never before had the very essence of life, the mind or soul of him, been so clarified. Remotely, he saw his past existence. Its troubles were nothing. His mother — but even here he remained impassive. A fog seemed to draw in from the far reaches of the moonlight. He was drifting in this fog, quietly, with a restfulness never known before. Pictures floated through the tinted mist. Then a confusion of thought came to him. His mind groped for expression, for something that would bring back the dream. Finally he saw once more the little gray minister spreading his hands over his people. The words came slowly from the depths of his being, faintly, as though born in the ethereal spaces of the night: "May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." Peace! A smile touched his lips, and became fixed. The moon passed the zenith and swam silently down the dark sky to the horizon.

Exorcism

By CLIFFORD FRANKLIN GESSLER

In the house across the alley
They are burning old shoes
To drive Robin the Fay out of the bread.

Motors hum in the street;
The wind sings a jazz melody through the telephone
wires;
High over the village an airplane spreads its dragon-
fly wings
And the drone of its flying drifts down to mingle
with the drone of the mills.

The last Druid has slept for a thousand years
Under the oak and the ivy of his grove —

But the bread is stringy;
The bread is sticky and soft like mucilage
In the center of the loaf.

And in the house across the alley
They are burning old shoes
To drive Robin the Fay out of the bread.

Meadow Brook

By GLENN WARD DRESBACH

Sway of the young corn, growing, growing,
Smell of the wind from the pastures blowing,
Then willows listening to a song
Of a meadow brook between them flowing!
I shall not stay to listen long
For fear I get the wistful air
Of willows listening, and care
Too much for what the brook is saying
Down through water lilies playing
Like fairies dangling pearly toes
While the water comes and goes.
I shall turn and look on grasses
Swaying in the wind, and trees,
Stones and grains — for soon with these,
While the water sings and passes,
I shall always have to stay —
No matter what the brook would say!
Why do I still linger, waiting,
Touching fingers with the brook,
Looking as the willows look —
While the water through my fingers
Gleams and slips away?

Two Poems

By MARY KATHERINE REELY

THE TRAIN PASSES

The field of flax is like a blue lake.
The wind ripples the bending blossoms into blue and
silver waves.
The train passes. . . .
Was it a blue lake?
Or was it a field of flax flowing under the prairie
wind?

RESURGENCE

My love for you has become as the mist that trails at
morning over the lake.
My love has become as the clear, white dawn that
lifts over the edge of the prairie's rim.
My love for you has become as the wind that ripples
the poplars at still of noon.
My old, old love that had died — that is dead,
Is arisen again in all the wistful and tremulous
beauty that plays on the face of the world.

Editorials

A significant venture in American publishing was hopefully inaugurated by the appearance in March of the first number of *The Measure, A Journal of Poetry*, edited at 449 West Twenty-second Street, New York City. The nine editors are Maxwell Anderson, Padraic Colum, Agnes Kendrick Gray, Carolyn Hall, Frank Ernest Hill, David Morton, Louise Townsend Nicholl, George O'Neil, and Genevieve Taggard; several of these have contributed to THE MIDLAND. From the nine an acting editor and an assistant are elected quarterly. We quote from the interesting and provocative editorial, "Thunder in the Index", by Maxwell Anderson, the acting editor for the first quarter:

"But why a magazine of verse at this inauspicious time? We can't rest satisfied because there has been good verse in the past and will be more in the future. If this is a day of minor verse we shall e'en write minor verse, for verse we must write. Hunger of the spirit is not appeased by the satisfaction of our elders — or youngers — and betters. The lean years must be lived through somehow or there would be nobody to function later on, and no tradition, no thread of creative thought. Certain generations have to content themselves with slow, painful, groping work in darkness."

The first number of *The Measure* contains a number of excellent poems. The format is pleasing and is well suited to the purpose of the magazine. *The*

Measure would be well worth reading if it published only the work of the nine poets who are its editors. Its usefulness will be greater, however, if it gives much of its space to the poems of others, as the intention seems to be. *The Measure* seems destined to a career of distinguished service in the field of American poetry. It has THE MIDLAND's heartiest good wishes.

Middle western literature is in danger of becoming fashionable in the metropolis itself. Surely *Vanity Fair* is a dependable index of the interests of sophisticated New York; and *Vanity Fair* has officially recognized the existence, literarily speaking, of a region west of Jersey. Of course the recognition comes in a characteristic way. It began in the February number, in Stephen Leacock's diverting and far from pointless piece of foolery entitled "Literary Sensations of 1921":

"It will come as good news to confirmed book addicts that 47 novels, dealing with small town life in the Middle West, are announced by one publisher alone. We are informed that the heroes of all the novels in question are unsuccessful in business, poor in spirit, doomed to meet only the dreariest types of people in the dreariest towns listed in the postal guide. They will wear alpaca dusters in all love scenes, and sleeve supporters. . . . So numerous are the creations of this sort which the publishers are announcing, that they have already given rise to a new school of realism, a school which has been referred to by an eminent critic as 'The Sears Roebuck' school of fiction."

But the March issue of *Vanity Fair* bears as the astonishing title of its leading article "Why There Must Be a Mid-Western Literature." The writer is Sherwood Anderson, presumably a member of the Sears Roebuck school of fiction. Anderson's article defies quotation; but it is a pleasant piece of work. The editor recommends its perusal.

Contributors to this Issue

HELEN SANTMYER is a native of Ohio and a graduate of Wellesley. She is at present employed by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York City.

EDWIN FORD PIPER is a teacher of English at the State University of Iowa. He was born in Nebraska. Mr. Piper is the author of *Barbed Wire and Other Poems*, a volume published by The Midland Press in 1917, and has been an associate editor of THE MIDLAND from the beginning. His work has appeared in *Poetry* and other magazines.

RUTH SUCKOW, a resident of Earlville, Iowa, was a contributor to the February issue of the current volume of THE MIDLAND.

WALTER J. MUILENBURG, a contributor of short stories to earlier volumes of THE MIDLAND, was born at Orange City, Iowa, and attended the State University of Iowa. He is at present a resident of Michigan.

CLIFFORD FRANKLIN GESSLER contributed to a recent issue of THE MIDLAND.

GLENN WARD DRESBACH has been a frequent contributor to THE MIDLAND. He was born in Illinois and is at present employed at El Paso, Texas. He is the author of several books of verse, the most recent being *Morning, Noon, and Night*, just published by the Four Seas Company of Boston.

MARY KATHERINE REELY is a middle-westerner, now engaged in editorial work in New York City.

